

such as poverty and other social and economic factors. The causes of poverty and of faulty habits and living should, therefore, first be sought, and remedial legislation should be aimed at these fundamental conditions. Such a method of approach would be more rational than to seek to secure an alleviation of these faults of present-day civilization through laws which, if hastily drafted and ill-adapted to American conditions, would upset and demoralize those methods of medical practice that, step by step, have gradually come into existence; largely through the mutual coöperation, on the one hand, of a profession whose members surpass all others in its altruistic endeavors, and, on the other, of a lay public that was responsive to and appreciative of the service rendered its members by practitioners of the healing art.

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**Legislators Should Think and Investigate Propaganda from Lay Sources.**—Legislators are, therefore, amply justified when they measure and carefully investigate the claims of lay propagandists, who, self-appointed in many instances, assume to be the real fountain heads of knowledge as to the manner in which medical practice should be carried on, both regarding economic and healing-art standpoints. The sound and analytical conservatism that has played so important a part in the real advances of scientific medicine can be used with equally good results in the diagnosis and evaluation of methods of treatment of social welfare and sickness-relief problems. Let us not be carried off our feet in favor of unwise legislation that would lower scientific medicine to cultist or mechanistic standards.

## EDITORIAL COMMENT\*

### ACUTE MERCURY POISONING

In the *Journal* of the American Medical Association, No. 16, April 21, 1931, Sanford M. Rosenthal published some experimental and clinical researches showing that the use internally and intravenously of "sodium formaldehyde sulphoxalate" has a marked antidotal effect in poisoning by mercury bichlorid, in both dogs and human beings.

Encouraged by the results of his experiments upon dogs, he was led to extend the use of the above drug to ten persons who had taken large doses of mercury bichlorid with suicidal intent. All of these patients came under treatment within two hours or less, and all recovered, as did nine of the twelve experimental dogs.

The method which he suggests for practical use as an antidote for mercury poisoning is as follows: Gastric lavage is done with a 5 per cent solution

of the "sulphoxalate" in distilled water, 200 cubic centimeters of this solution being left in the stomach.

Following this, 10 grams of "sulphoxalate," dissolved in 100 to 200 cubic centimeters of distilled water, is introduced intravenously, 20 to 30 minutes being required for the injection. Another intravenous injection of 5 grams of the same drug, in similar dilution, may be administered after 4 to 6 hours in severe cases.

The usual deleterious effects of mercury on the kidneys were largely prevented. The presence or absence in the blood of the "sulphoxalate," as shown by the precipitation of mercury in a bichlorid solution, will furnish an indication as to whether or not further sulphoxalate is needed, 3 to 5 hours after the first injection.

When a colitis results from the mercury poisoning, the author advises high colonic irrigations, with a 1 to 1,000 sulphoxalate solution.

Commercial "sodium formaldehyde sulphoxalate" is impure and should not be used intravenously. The purified product can be obtained in ampoules from the manufacturers of "nearsphenamin".<sup>1</sup> The solution in distilled water must always be freshly prepared.

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<sup>1</sup> Merck & Company, New York, The Diarsenal Company, Inc., Buffalo; The Dermatological Research Company, Philadelphia.

**Sleep.**—There are a great many persons who habitually assume a last-resort attitude toward the bedroom. For these persons business, recreation and the indulgences of life all maintain a priority over sleep. If will power and inclinations were the controlling forces of existence, such a position might be justified. Unfortunately, however, such is not the case.

In spite of man's progress and great scientific achievements, the fact remains that so far as his body is concerned, he is just as dictatorially controlled by nature as he was in the Garden of Eden. Old Dame Nature at that time established some very definite laws regarding bodily requirements; and while, of course, she gives man his head as to his obedience to them, she invariably exacts her price if her mandates are consistently violated.

Only the other day, for instance, a learned scientist whose intellect was the envy and admiration of many, so forgot first principles that he worked day and night developing a mathematical formula. A sudden breakdown was the result. And in forty-eight hours he was dead.

While this is an uncommon case, it nevertheless typifies the general snubbing that nature receives by many who in their absurd conceit imagine that the basic living rules can be habitually broken without penalty.

Sleep is one of the prime essentials in the animal kingdom; and this is true whether the animal be a cat, a dog, or well-educated man.

Of course there is a very limited number of persons who thrive on less sleep than others. However, generally speaking, the majority of mature persons require eight hours of sleep each night. And younger persons—many of whom, alas, do not get it—require more.

It may be somewhat of a blow to one's pride, but it will be a boon to one's life to realize that nature, and not man, possesses the final authority on the sleep question.

\* This department of CALIFORNIA AND WESTERN MEDICINE presents editorial comment by contributing members on items of medical progress, science and practice, and on topics from recent medical books or journals. An invitation is extended to all members of the California and Nevada Medical Associations to submit brief editorial discussions suitable for publication in this department. No presentation should be over five hundred words in length.